

ART. XVI.—*Diseases of the Skin.* By ERASMUS WILSON, F. R. S. Fourth American, from the fourth and enlarged London edition. Philadelphia: Blanchard & Lea, 1857.

THE writings of Wilson, upon diseases of the skin, are by far the most scientific and practical that have ever been presented to the medical world on this subject. For many years a large portion of his time has been spent in the field of dermatology. His eminent position as a medical man in the metropolis of England has afforded him the most ample scope for prosecuting any investigations relating to the manifold abnormal conditions which the external investment of the human frame is known to exhibit. The results of these investigations he has proffered to the profession, by whom, without doubt, they will continue to be appreciated on both sides of the Atlantic. Mr. Wilson's style is in the highest sense elegant and classical; it is absolutely faultless. It possesses an individuality; it glows with a freshness and flows from a depth of thought which mark it as emanating from the rich fountain of his own brain.

The present edition is a great improvement on all its predecessors. In it the indefatigable author has arranged, in part, a new system of classification, founded, as he believes, on the only true basis, the CAUSE of the disease. To the consideration and elucidation of this subject one entire chapter is devoted. A new chapter is introduced relating to the *general pathology* of cutaneous maladies; and another, in which their *general therapeutics* are discussed in a very lucid and able manner. Moreover, we have a separate chapter on diseases of the *sebiparous glands*; and a brief but valuable article on the *malignant pustule* of the skin. The different *syphilitic eruptions* also occupy a prominent position in the work; and are arranged according to their forms and the period of their development in a table of classification.

Probably no branch of medical education at the present day is so sadly neglected, we might say ignored, as that which relates to a knowledge of the skin; and probably no department of medical and surgical practice is performed in so blind, so graceless, so culpable a style as that bestowed upon its maladies. Students look at the skin. Of course they do. They see that, like the clouds suspended over their heads, it presents various shades of colour between white and black. But, of its structural character, its anatomical elements, and of its deviations from health, they are well-nigh as ignorant as the untutored wild men of the forest. This, at least, is true of a vast number, who seek refuge and patronage under the prestige and shadow of a diploma, obtained at the fountains of medical science, that send their streams through the length and breadth of the land. Well, this destitution, or meagreness of knowledge, and its manifold direful consequences, accruing to thousands who apply for deliverance from some annoying cutaneous affection, may be effectually removed through the instrumentality of the brilliant, scientific light, reflected from the elegant pages of Erasmus Wilson. To one inclined to ponder upon the suggestive and instructive contents of these pages, with an attitude of mind open to drink in knowledge, it would seem as if the spirit of philanthropy, united with the genius of sound learning, and commiserating the sufferings of humanity, had prompted and qualified our author to present to his professional brethren a system—a code—a practical guide, at a most opportune epoch; and which, if they follow, will be to them what the skilful and faithful pilot is to a sea-tossed vessel, seeking anchorage in a strange harbor.

To dwell upon all the great merits and high claims of the work before us, *seriatim*, would indeed be an agreeable service; it would be a mental homage which we could freely offer, but we should thus occupy an undue amount of space in this *Journal*. We will, however, look at some of the more salient points with which it abounds, and which make it incomparably superior in excellence to all other treatises on the subject of dermatology.

The first chapter of the book is dedicated to a consideration of the minute anatomy and physiology of the skin. An exact description, couched in plain but graphic phraseology, is given of the several component tissues, which, in their united and associated capacity, constitute this most complex covering to the entire human organization. The mind of the reader is thus, in the very beginning of his study, placed upon a scientific basis, without which no real useful improvement can be made in the practical department to which he is subsequently introduced, and in which he expects to labour. To reach this latter goal, through the medium of successful study, is a noble employment for every medical student and for every practitioner of the healing art, and is sure to carry with it its own most welcome reward.

In pursuing his investigations of the normal structural anatomy of the skin, under the guiding hand of Wilson, the reader is agreeably surprised to find that the patient researches and observations of his teacher have shed a flood of light upon many obscure points that had obstructed his path in all previous investigations; and this light, this veritable knowledge which he has gained in regard to healthy cutaneous structure, is easily and directly applicable to the morbid anatomy or pathology of the skin; in other words, to the diseases that invade this tegumentary organ. For instance, Wilson has devoted much study to the mode of development and growth of the epidermis; and the curious results at which he has arrived, and which we can verify from our own investigations, are detailed in the work before us. They are extremely interesting, and materially aid us in understanding some of the anatomical features of lepra. The investigations we are now considering have educated the fact that in this complaint the primitive epidermic granules are abnormally formed, being in a state of hypertrophy from deranged nutrition of the derma.

The structure of the hair has received a due share of attention, and conclusions naturally flowing from these investigations are also presented for our consideration. The minute organization of the pilous tissue harmonizes with that of its analogue, the epidermis, being composed of the same primitive granules, differing only in their arrangement, as being destined to serve a different purpose. These horny appendages of the skin, that is the hairs, are produced by the involution and subsequent evolution of the epidermis; the involution constituting the sheath of the follicle, in which the hair is inclosed, and the evolution the body or shaft of the hair. Our author condescends even to the work of *splitting of a hair*; that is, his microscopical examinations lead to a natural division of a hair into a central portion, a peripheral extremity, the point; and a central extremity, the bulb or root. The coarsest hair is found in the female, and the finest in the male. This is the reverse from the general opinion. The habit of cutting the hair or shaving it, does not increase its size. The hair is composed of three different tissues—a loose, cellular tissue, which occupies its centre, and constitutes its medulla or pith; a fibrous tissue, which incloses the preceding and forms the chief bulk of the human hair; and of a thin layer of superimposed scales, which envelops the fibrous structure, and forms the external structure. The primitive granules of the hair are arranged in such regular order as to have the appearance of parallel fibres, and their variation in tint gives rise to diversity of colour in

the hair. Under the influence of disease the hair is liable to a change, which Mr. Wilson compares to the alteration of the epidermis which takes place in lepra—that is, it becomes lax in texture, brittle, twisted, and is robbed of its natural colour. The malady, of which we are told this morbid change is a symptom, is “*ringworm*.” An examination of the hair in this troublesome complaint exhibits its primitive granules morbidly enlarged, like those of the epidermic cells in lepra; both diseases being a granular degeneration of the cells of which the epidermal product is composed.

Another important and interesting discovery to which our author’s investigations have conducted is, that the pigment of the choroid membrane of the eyeball and melanosis are composed of the same identical organisms.

Such are some of the examples of the first results of the application of scientific research to practical uses. Wilson, in the plenitude of his modesty, regards them as humble examples, but at the same time they offer inducements for other similar researches.

The plates, illustrating the work, are fifteen in number, eight being coloured after nature, the remainder being plain. Each of the coloured plates represents a group of diseases, and they will serve to assist the physician in forming a diagnosis of any given specimen he may encounter on the living subject.

The second chapter is devoted to a *Classification* of diseases of the skin. By those who are familiar with the previous editions of Wilson, it will be remembered that the nomenclature which he adopted went by the title of the “*Natural System*,” founded on the physiology and pathology of the skin; and took, as its leading features, the phenomena that wait on inflammation of the derma, as congestion, effusion, suppuration, desquamation, &c. In all essential particulars this arrangement coincided with the system of Willan. To regard diseases of the skin merely as essential affections, located in some one or more of the different component parts of the derma, while the others are supposed to be in health, is doubtless correct reasoning in many cases; but the theory is a hazardous one, and often a false one; and the attempt made by Wilson to remodel the system of Willan, and partially set up and build upon it the anatomical or “*Natural System*,” was regarded by many as unsuccessful and fallacious. With this system our author himself was dissatisfied, and for many years his mind has been engaged in constructing a classification of a more practical and philosophical character. He has at last completed an *Etiological System* of arrangement, which was initiated by Hippocrates, and followed by Franek, Plumbe, Baumès, and others. The advantages set forth as appertaining to this system, and raising it above all others in the scale of excellence, are, that it renders the treatment of cutaneous maladies more simple and rational, and removes them from the special and isolated position which they now occupy, into the general category of diseases incident to the human frame. In some respects the present nomenclature of Wilson reminds one of the views entertained by M. Devergie, of Paris, who regards the determination of the precise dermic anatomical characters and seat of each particular disease as a matter of minor consequence, but looks at the pathological relations of cutaneous maladies with the conditions of internal organs, and of the system in general, as a matter of great importance, and to be always borne in mind. He divides all skin diseases into *secreting* and *non-secreting*—a striking and practical mark as far as it goes.

The cardinal principles laid down in the present edition of Wilson in the nosological arrangement and for the treatment of cutaneous disorders, leave little room to complain of the hollow jargon and bluster of high sounding words as applied to this branch of medical science. Nor will there any

longer be a reason for the neglect of their study on the part of the young man who is preparing himself for the practical service of the physician and surgeon, either in his own consulting room, or at the bedside of the patient. Nor need the limber tongue of the professor, who should be regarded as a reliable oracle in the department in which he instructs, again be heard to designate as *tinea capitis* a case of impetigo, which happens to be located on the face, and which is on exhibition before a medical class. This blunder, incredible and reprehensible as it may seem, we know to have been made not five years ago, in one of our high courts of medical erudition and science, without a blush or without correction from the gentleman who committed it. As we speak no names, either of parties or of places, we allude to the *fact* without apology. We have to remark, in this connection, that had the profession been on terms of greater intimacy with Wilson, such a diagnosis would not have been palmed off upon scores of young students, a portion of whom were unable to reconcile what they heard with what they saw. Such ignorance, at the present day, is without excuse, although in the early dawn of medical knowledge it might have been winked at. The great work of Wilson will be an important help, a reliable text-book for all students and professors and practitioners, by whom it can be profitably consulted in doubtful emergencies, both in the diagnosis and treatment of individual cases. We have heard Wilson denounced by men holding a high position in the medical ranks, as being an obscure writer, using language which they could not comprehend. These objections, however, have uniformly been of that class of practitioners who are totally unfamiliar with the first elements of Dermatology; and who, although excellent in the ordinary calling of physician or surgeon, find themselves in a thick wilderness whenever cutaneous pathology or cutaneous therapeutics is the theme of conversation. To be thoroughly understood, Wilson needs to be studied with the same thoughtful attention and concentration of the mind required for a proper comprehension of Homer or Horace in the ancient classics, Lord Coke or Chancellor Kent in the law, Velpeau in surgery, or Mason Good in the general science of medicine.

The derma and its related dependencies, its multitudinous glands, and their follicles or tubes—all highly complex in organization, and performing a diversity of functions essential to the well-being of the total physical economy, are subject to various abnormal conditions resulting from *inflammation*. These conditions admit of being divided into two primary groups, namely—

I. Diseases affecting the general structure; and,

II. Diseases affecting the special structure of the skin.

Under the first primary group of diseases affecting the general structure, the *Etiological* system of Wilson embraces seven typical forms, five of which correspond with as many orders of the Willanese classification, namely, Exanthemata, Papulæ, Vesiculæ, Pustulæ, and Bullæ. These our author regards as arising from *general* causes. The term *general*, as employed in this connection, is intended to suggest the idea of a cause originating in the mal-performance of the ordinary functions of animal life, rather than to include a variety of causes. Wilson holds to the opinion, that all the diseases included under this head proceed from one primary and essential cause—that is, mal-assimilation; in other words, from an irritant poison generated in the organism of the individual as a consequence of mal-assimilation—the morbid action in the cutaneous tissues being a vital process, having for its object the elimination of that poison by the skin. It has been a dominant notion with many practitioners of sound sense, that in diseases of the skin there is present in the system some peccant element, which displays its malign influence upon the cutaneous surface in preference to seizing upon other organs, for the rea-

son that nature instinctively employs this organ as the medium through which she essays to rid herself of this inimical principle, whatever the principle may be; and in performing this work, certain abnormal processes are brought into play. The idea of Wilson is but a clearer, more definite, and more scientific embodiment and expression of this notion. It savours largely of the old humoral pathology of Brown, for so many years regarded as obsolete and with disfavour—as a sort of fossil relic handed down from the dark ages of medicine. But, after all the vicissitudes and fortunes which it has encountered, this same Brunonian pathology is once more considered to have its foundation on the rock of truth, and not in the crude speculations of the cloister, or in the blind credulity of ignorance. And the medical profession, as well as those who may hereafter require their services for the amelioration or cure of cutaneous disorders, will owe to Wilson a debt of gratitude for the lucid manner in which he has presented this branch of his profound and difficult labours; for these labours will conduct to the most auspicious results in the field of therapeutics.

Admitting that mal-assimilation is the great primary cause of diseases affecting the general structure of the skin, the *variety* which is presented in the form and condition of the apparent disease, is simply the product of certain phenomena that are known to modify the features of disease when *any other organs* of the system chance to be the seat of that disease; the result, in fact, of predisposing causes, either congenital or acquired.

Diseases arising from general causes are divided and grouped in the following manner:—

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| <p>a. Erythema (exanthemata).
 Pityriasis.
 Erysipelas.
 Roseola.
 Urticaria.</p> | <p>c. Eczema (vesiculæ).
 Psoriasis.
 Sudamina.</p> |
| <p>b. Lichen (papulæ).
 Rosacea.
 Strophulus,
 Prurigo.</p> | <p>d. Impetigo (pustulæ).
 Ecthyma.
 e. Herpes (bullæ).
 Pemphigus.
 f. Furunculus,
 Anthrax.
 g. Purpura.</p> |

To those who are accustomed to the study of cutaneous pathology, according to the nomenclature of Willan, or according to the previous editions of Wilson, it may seem not a little odd, that psoriasis should be transferred from the position it has so long held among the squamæ, to be introduced into the order vesiculæ. We confess we should as soon thought of looking for a tropical plant in the frigid zone; or we should as soon have expected to find erythema transplanted from the prominent position where it now stands as the representative and type of the exanthemata, to be arranged with the order papulæ or tuberculata. Perhaps time and further study may prepare and accommodate our mind for the unexpected change—a change to which we are not now reconciled. We have already signified our high respect for the erudition of Wilson; and were it our custom to yield in blind acquiescence to any writer on the subject of dermatology, Wilson would be that man.

In chronic cases of psoriasis, or psoriasis inveterata, a trifling, serous exudation, of entirely insignificant import, is occasionally seen in the fissures produced in consequence of the long existing hypertrophy and low degree of inflammation; but a retrospection of the eruption conducts back to a small, hard, red papule, which, after an existence of two or three days, has its summit surmounted and whitened with a minute scale; and if its initiatory pathological change is suggestive of any change in name, it would be, in our opinion, that instead of a squama, psoriasis might, with some seeming pro-

priety, receive the cognomen of papule, and be affianced in the same order with lichen. But when we find psoriasis coupled in the same order with eczema—a disease characterized from the very onset by the formation of almost innumerable vesicles—colourless and transparent globules, we confess our inability to harmonize the elements of the latter affection, with those small, solid, scaly elevations, which announce the disease to be psoriasis. Whatever changes or varying products may characterize either of the disorders here alluded to, during their more advanced periods, no alteration in the generic name, suggested by the typical form of these maladies, would be called for in consequence of these ulterior changes. Time operates great transformations in diseases as well as in other matters—in men—in trees—in flowers—in rocks. Take, for instance eczema. To day, it may be purely a vesicular eruption. To morrow the vesicles will have risen perhaps to imperfect pustules; and the diseased patch will yield a sero-purulent discharge, and will present other features, which will bring it into near alliance with impetigo. Nothing, in fact, is more common, than some such modification of the original, typical form which the eruption presented. Where such transformation takes place, the dermatologist adds a qualifying term. In the instance supposed, the name eczema receives the appendix *impetiginodes*. This covers the whole ground. The nosologist and pathologist are both satisfied and agreed. Thus in psoriasis: If a case happens, during the existence of which a slight and occasional ichorous exudation constitutes one of its features, perhaps the term *eczematous psoriasis* might be admissible; although it is extremely doubtful if the vesicles of eczema are ever detected in psoriasis. We have examined hundreds of cases of the latter complaint, and in none did we ever discover a vesicle, such as presents itself in eczema, or anything akin to it. And we would ask, who has? In regard to eczema, it may be remarked, that however chronic it may be, it never loses its tendency ever and anon to develop vesicles. These vesicles, in aged or very feeble subjects, sometimes part with their watery contents by the process of absorption; and the cuticular capsules remain unbroken for a considerable time; are a mere scale, covering the derma; and to the unpracticed eye bear a strong resemblance to psoriasis. And we have seen in individual cases, where a brief contest seemed to have sprung up between the two maladies now in question—the one apparently struggling to supplant the other; but being of such opposite elementary attributes, and endowed with such different natural tendencies—the one to generate the vesicles, and the other not, we are never at a loss to draw the line of demarcation.

In his seventh chapter, and in connection with what is offered relative to eczematous eruptions, Mr. Wilson has the following explanation in reference to the removal of psoriasis to the position it now holds among the vesiculæ:—

“In the present group of cutaneous affections, the eczematous group, I have thought it right to restore to its proper place the term derived from the Hebrew, *tsorat*, namely, *psoriasis*, which, as Mason Good observes, ‘having lost its primitive and restricted signification, seems to have wandered in search of a meaning,’ and had at different times, and by different persons, various meanings attributed to it; being sometimes used to express scaly eruptions generally, sometimes the scales of leprosy; but last, and with a pretty common consent, the far higher efflorescence of scaly tetter or scalls, denominated in the Levitical code, *saphat*; and by the Latins, *scabies*, or *impetigo sicca*.’ Psoriasis, in its proper acceptation, signifies a scalliness of the skin, resulting from chronic erythema, attended with thickening of the tissues of the derma, and more or less chapping of the inflamed part; in a word, *chronic eczema*, when eczema has produced a thickened and chapped state of the skin, and ceasing to pour out an ichorous secretion, throws off from the inflamed surface a suc-

cession of scales; or *chronic lichen agrius*, when lichen has left a similar condition of the skin, the papules of the original eruption being obliterated in the general thickening of the chronically inflamed part. In truth, psoriasis is to eczema and lichen agrius, what pityriasis is to erythema.

"It will be seen by these observations, that I might have introduced psoriasis into the group of lichenous eruptions, following lichen agrius; but I have preferred to attach it to eczema, because, in truth, lichen agrius and eczema, as being in part a lichen passing into the stage of eczema, or assuming the characters of eczema, of being indeed a lichen *eczematosus*."

The second sub-group or division, embraces those diseases which arise from special external causes—such as parasites in or under the skin; and those diseases which are produced by the destructive agency of heat and cold. Of the maladies affecting the general structure of the skin, it is in this group alone that we meet with affections of the cutaneous surface, independent of constitutional origin;—those of other groups being essentially *blood-diseases*, and arising from a morbid condition of that fluid.

The third group, which is an important one, includes diseases arising from special internal causes. The number of these diseases is five—lepra, a squama; and lupus, scrofuloderma, kelis, elephantiasis, the last four being of the order tuberculata of Willan. In this group the cause is unknown, or merely hypothetical.

The fourth group relates to diseases arising from the syphilitic poison. This cause is well known and universally recognized.

The fifth and last group, embraces those diseases which arise from animal poisons of unknown origin, and give rise to eruptive fevers. The individual diseases proceeding from these poisons are, rubeola, scarlatina, variola, varicella, vaccinia. All the foregoing groups affect the general structure of the skin; and constitute Wilson's first great division. The *etiological* method of classification is confined to this category of maladies, which, with the exception of the second sub-group, have their source in constitutional disturbance—in some abnormal state of the vital fluid.

The second grand primary division comprises those affections which have their seat in the special structures of the skin; that is, in its vessels and nerves; in its papillæ; in the pigmentary principle; in its glands, hair, and nails. Wilson regards these constituents and appendages of the skin as so many *heads*, under which the morbid affections may be considered. A small number of these diseases are constitutional; but most of them are simply local—pure diseases of the skin, and removed from the influence of the constitutional powers; and therefore the application of the *etiological* nomenclature would not be attended with any advantage over the old physiological system; and to the latter our author adheres in the classification of this second *great division*.

At the end of the chapter, which is devoted to a consideration of the subject of classifying the various disordered conditions of the skin, a *tubular view* is presented, and is divided into two parts, corresponding with, and naturally growing out of, the previous text. That is, the names of the individual diseases affecting the general structure of the skin, are placed before the reader, by themselves;—and lastly, the diseases affecting the special structures of the skin, are named and arranged by themselves;—the particular anatomical constituents of the skin, in which these local maladies exist, are also specified. Thus, the student is furnished with every possible help which he can reasonably desire, or which the nature of the subject renders practicable.

The observations relating to the general pathology of the skin are highly interesting and important. The clear and logical manner in which the sub-

ject is presented, is entirely satisfactory, and is eminently calculated to instruct. It is impracticable, in this connection, and in justice to the author, to offer an epitome of what he has written with so much care and good sense, with a view to show the analogy between different diseases of the skin. We choose to commend the entire chapter to the careful attention of all who are either practically or theoretically interested in the subject of Dermatology. While it is with unfeigned pleasure that we speak thus of the great merits of this chapter, we feel justified in saying that it contains a remark in regard to Lichen, which is at variance with our own observations; and we doubt not but Mr. Wilson will listen candidly to the few words we take occasion to submit upon the point we refer to. We are told that

“The papules of lichen are never found upon the scalp, the palms of the hands, or soles of the feet; in the former situation, probably because the pores are large, more firmly retained in their place from their relations to hairs, and the skin between the pores more susceptible of congestive action. In the latter they do not occur in consequence of the thickness of the cuticle.”

A few years since a boy, eight years old, was under our care for a chronic lichen, which had been upon him for more than two years. The papules were disseminated over large districts of integument covering the body, limbs, face, and scalp. While we had charge of the case it was seen by several medical friends. Within the past year, a woman forty years of age, of thin, spare habit—a great sufferer from dyspepsia—consulted us for a papular eruption on the hands and lower part of the forearms. The palmar and dorsal aspects were about equally occupied by the eruption, which was a well developed lichen. It lasted about four months before it wholly disappeared.

The lad above mentioned was cured during a voyage to the Sandwich Islands, the place of his birth. In the case of the woman, all the fingers and both thumbs were more or less involved in the eruption, as well upon the inner as outer surface. The two instances here cited go to show that one man, although occupying a favourable position for observation, may not see everything that appertains to the most common diseases, whether superficial or otherwise.

The general therapeutics of the skin constitute a very essential and prominent feature of the volume before us. They are considered in relation to cutaneous diseases that are acute and chronic: in reference to the three periods of life, infancy, manhood, and old age; in respect to different temperaments, normal and abnormal; in persons of different idiosyncrasy and diathesis; and in different conditions of vigor or debility of the system. The local and constitutional methods of treating cutaneous affections, in all their various stages, whether of an acute or chronic form, are thoroughly discussed; and the value of each method is presented to our consideration. The two branches of the subject, that is, the medical and surgical, are harmoniously blended together in a manner that will best secure that mutual aid, which is so important and efficient in carrying out a scientific and successful management of these diseases. A union of the qualities of a well educated physician and surgeon is required. The services of neither can be discarded or dispensed with. The etiological principle of classification, adopted so far as relates to those diseases that are believed to have their origin in an unhealthy condition of the blood, naturally suggests and develops this view of the mutual advantages and importance of having the surgical and medical features of the treatment nicely balanced. The mere local disease—the eruption of the skin, is but a symptom, an index of the disorder of the blood. To one familiar with the cutaneous eruption that may be present in any individual case, the

cause of the constitutional aberration will be apparent. The external symptom reveals the diathesis of the patient, and gives a clue to his medical history; and to the intelligent mind of the practitioner, who understands the cardinal principles of surgery as well as those of the medical art, this same abnormal state of the skin—this local symptom spread out for visual inspection, will be suggestive of a proper line of conduct in attempting to remove the constitutional disorder, as well as that which is displayed upon the skin.

Diseases of the skin, issuing from mal-assimilation, are rarely benefited, our author tells us, by depletion either with the lancet or leeches. This doctrine is worthy of all acceptance. Years ago this was our creed; we can hardly say from whence we received it; but we have long practised upon it. The best remedies, even in the *acute* stage, are moderate purgatives, effervescent salines, diaphoretics and diuretics; and when the acute stage has passed, Wilson advises tonics, bitters with mineral acids, or with alkalies—with or without the ferruginous salts, according to the hæmic or anæmic condition of the patient.

In *chronic* affections of the skin, the presence and the effects of mal-assimilation are more or less obvious; and are evinced by various symptoms, independent of any cutaneous derangement. A careful examination will bring these symptoms to light. Although the patient may consider that he is in fair health, it will be found that the functions of digestion are badly performed. There is mal-conversion, mal-appropriation of the food taken to support the system; there is imperfect chyme and imperfect chyle, and of course impure blood; and the organs, which it supplies, are injured in their physical condition, and impaired in their functional powers. The muscular apparatus is enfeebled—the heart palpitates; the brain and nervous organization suffer—the intellect is depressed, and other mental derangements ensue. Dyspepsia may be a trifling affair in itself, and mal-assimilation a small matter when considered apart, but Wilson regards these conditions as the authors of various cutaneous maladies; and when thus viewed in relation to their consequences, they may very properly be ranked among the most serious of the bodily infirmities of man. The current of impure blood goes into the minutest tissue and into the most attenuated ramifications of that tissue, throughout the corporeal frame. The lungs, the liver, the kidneys, the skin, are all irrigated and enfeebled by this poisonous stream. The whole system becomes loaded with morbid humours of greater or less intensity; and the skin, as one of the emunctory channels, is called upon to eliminate the disturbing agent, while the other emunctories may be left to perform their normal service. The enemy is driven to the surface, causing congestion; and the extra labour of the cutaneous vessels commences. The result is, that the patient may have an eruption of erythema, a lichen or eczema. Here we have an illustrative example of the humoral pathology and the faith of our author in its reality explicitly announced. He holds and iuculcates the same views in relation to diseases more profoundly located.

“What,” he asks, “determines the seat of the congestion? To which the answer is plain—Temperature, season, age, idiosyncrasy, previous debility or disease, the predisposing or exciting cause. In the cold seasons of the year, the morbid humours, driven, for elimination, upon the mucous membranes of the lungs, may occasion bronchitis; in warm weather they may be precipitated on the mucous membrane of the alimentary canal, causing diarrhoea; under the influence of moral excitement, the result may be apoplexy; or, in other states of the system, gout, rheumatism, or neuralgia. Or, in the absence of, or even in association with any of these, the seat of elimination may be the skin, &c.”

It has already been remarked that the methods of treatment, as relates

both to acute and chronic cutaneous disorders, are in conformity with the pathological ideas, which are so eloquently urged upon the practitioner.

If the symptoms assume an acute, inflammatory type, the febrile excitement is to be reduced, and an attempt must be made to neutralize and eliminate the morbid properties of the blood. In chronic diseases all this must be done, while at the same time the constitution must be buoyed up, by resorting to a tonic course of remedial measures. In some patients a depression of the vital energies is produced by a mere accumulation of morbid humours, in which case, our author argues, simple elimination by purgatives will strengthen the whole frame, and will heighten, rather than diminish, the power of the patient. Such cases, however, are rare, compared with those which, from the beginning, require a tonic system of treatment, rather than cathartics.

When a patient, suffering from chronic cutaneous disease, presents himself for medical advice, the practitioner should set himself to inquire into the particulars of the case, and then propound to himself: what are the indications to be fulfilled? They are, *firstly*, to eliminate; *secondly*, to restore power; *thirdly*, to alleviate the local distress. These three indications are considered in detail, together with the means at the command of the medical adviser, for fulfilling them. This portion of the volume supplies much valuable instruction, not met with in any other work; and it will be found of great utility in the diffusion of sound philosophical principles, relating to the treatment of all classes of patients on whom any of the proteiform varieties of cutaneous affections may exist. The author draws largely—almost exclusively—from the rich stores of his own scientific researches and his practical experience; and there is an unctious originality, blended with profound and enlarged erudition, which gives a refreshing charm to the work, from beginning to end. No mere speculative views are allowed a place in this volume, which, without a doubt, will for a very long period, be acknowledged as the chief standard work on Dermatology. The principles of an enlightened and rational therapeia are introduced on every appropriate occasion. The general practitioner and surgeon who, peradventure, may have for years regarded cutaneous maladies as scarcely worthy their attention, because, forsooth, they are not fatal in their tendency; or who, if they have attempted their cure, have followed the blind guidance of empiricism, will almost assuredly be roused to a new and becoming interest in this department of practice, through the inspiring agency of this book. We speak not extravagantly when we say that the learning which pervades and characterizes this treatise, is so agreeably presented, that no medical reader having any claim to scholarship, or having any abiding desire for improvement and for professional usefulness, can fail to reap a large benefit for himself and for his patients, by a close study of its doctrines, and a careful observance of its practical directions and suggestions in matters appertaining to the general and topical management of diseases of the skin. The untiring zeal and commanding talents of Wilson will draw many disciples after him. This is as it should be. They will find him no uncertain, flickering taper; but a clear and brilliant light, shining with steady radiance, and guiding their steps in safety. And they will also learn, if they do not already understand, that no man can be a skilful practitioner in Dermatology, unless he is something more than a mere specialist. He must be endowed with enlarged views and varied knowledge and sound judgment in the several branches of learning that constitute a thoroughly educated physician and surgeon.

S. D.